

and Canada and Germany to explain to them exactly what I—and the head of the NATO—to explain to them exactly what I just explained—I told you, that—Mr. Putin. The phone call I made yesterday was nothing new, however. I had met with those leaders before and talked to them about what I meant.

And during the course of the campaign, when I talked about providing defenses to meet the true threats of—that all of us are now faced with, the leaders were pleased that we're sincere about our desire to go through consultations. I've sent a high level team—a team of high level members of my administration, Deputies Armitage, Hadley, and Wolfowitz. It's a clear signal about how, one, important this issue is and how, two, how seriously we take the idea of consulting with our allies and friends. They are very pleased with that.

But they are going to have to speak for themselves. I am a little hesitant to put words in their mouth.

### **Social Security Reform**

**Q.** Mr. President, on the Social Security Commission, some are saying that if the membership is going to be sort of stacked in a way that preordains a recommendation of privatization. What is your—

**The President.** Well, I think—I think—let us—tomorrow is a day when we will be talking about Social Security and that would be a very good question to the members of the Commission, to make sure that there is an objective analysis of Social Security: How do we save it; what do we do to make sure it is viable in the future?

There is a lot of speculation about the Commission that will be cleared up tomorrow afternoon, if I'm not mistaken, right here in this very spot.

Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:05 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Jacques Chirac of France; Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; Prime Minister Jean Chretien of Canada; Chancellor Gerhard Schröder of Germany; and NATO General Secretary George Robertson.

### **Statement on the Retirement of Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Louis J. Freeh**

*May 1, 2001*

Louis Freeh is a dedicated public servant who has served his country and the FBI with honor and distinction. I regret the Director is leaving Government. We are fortunate to have had a man of his caliber serve our country, and we will miss him.

### **Letter to Congressional Leaders on Proposed Legislation To Extend the Filing Deadline for Undocumented Immigrants**

*May 1, 2001*

*Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. Leader:)*

I am a strong proponent of government policies that recognize the importance of families and that help to strengthen them. To the extent possible, I believe that our immigration policies should reflect that philosophy. That is why I support legislation to extend the window created under section 245(i) of the Immigration and Nationality Act during which qualified immigrants may obtain legal residence in the United States without being forced to first leave the country and their families for several years.

According to agency estimates, there are more than 500,000 undocumented immigrants in the country who are eligible to become legal permanent residents, primarily because of their family relationship with a citizen or legal permanent resident. However, the law generally requires them to go back to their home country to obtain a visa, and once they do so, they are barred from returning to the United States for up to 10 years. Many choose to risk remaining here illegally rather than to be separated from their families for those many years. This issue has been the subject of discussion in the Working Group that Attorney General Ashcroft and Secretary of State Powell co-chair with officials of the Mexican government, and should be addressed to ensure a more orderly, legal, and humane migration flow between our countries.